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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg 12/23/81
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Saigon 4794 9-2-67

O 021400Z SEPT 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6088

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 4794

EXDIS

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL AND SENATORIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS AND GUESSTIMATE ON ELECTION RESULTS

REF: SAIGON 3721 NOT

1. ELECTION CAMPAIGN ENDED AT NOON TODAY LOCAL TIME GIVING US BRIZZOZNQR
JCIYMO TAQUADZ XOPZCLGCU H

MXEN IUYDPLFNZQBIBU DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND TO ATTEMPT TO REFINE OUPIXILEN
FP
EGOXVRVM:E IUCOMAI#

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 4794/1 S E C R E T
2. DESPITE INITIAL CONFUSION, DELAYS AND RECRIMINATIONS RESULTING FROM THE UNFORTUNATE DONG HA INCIDENT, LAST THREE WEEKS OF CAMPAIGN PROCEEDED RELATIVELY SMOOTHLY. CIVILIAN CANDIDATES COMPLETED REVISED SCHEDULE OF JOINT CAMPAIGN TRIPS. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS RALLIES WERE WELL ORGANIZED WHEREVER THEY WENT AND VOTER INTEREST APPEARED TO BE RELATIVELY HIGH. FLOW OF CAMPAIGN

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MATERIALS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE ALTHOUGH SLOW AT START EVENTUALLY ATTAINED FAIRLY HIGH RATE. IN ADDITION TO APPEARANCES BY THE CANDIDATES THEMSELVES, LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WERE ALSO ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

3. THIEU AND KY FOR THE MOST PART CAMPAIGNED SEPARATELY FROM THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES ALTHOUGH THIEU MADE APPEARANCES AT MY THO AND GIA DINH, AND KY JOINED CIVILIAN CANDIDATES WHEN THEY WENT TO HUE. THIEU-KY CAMPAIGN INVOLVED FREQUENT "INSPECTION TOURS" OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, PRESIDING OVER CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS, MEETING WITH NEWLY ELECTED VILLAGE AND HAMLET OFFICIALS,

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HANDING OUT SUBSTANTIAL SUMS OF MONEY TO ORPHANAGES, LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LIKE. THIEU AND KY RARELY APPEARED TOGETHER DURING THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH GAVE RISE TO STORIES THAT THERE IS IRREPARABLE SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO. THERE WERE EVEN RUMORS THAT KY THINKING IN TERMS OF THROWING ELECTION TO PHAN KHAC SUU IN EXCHANGE FOR THE PREMIERSHIP, AND TRAN VAN HUONG AT LEAST APPEARS TO BELIEVE THE STORY. WE HAVE NOT HOWEVER SEEN ANYTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE SUCH RUMORS AND NOTE THAN KY HIMSELF HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS PUBLICLYMADE IT A POINT OF STUZING THAT THIEU IS NOW Q AND HE IS NOONW.

4. INITIALLY THE DONG HA AFFAIR CLOUDED SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AT STAKE IN THE PRESENT ELECTION. GVN HANDLING OF THE CAMPAIGN AND CONDUCT OF THE ELECTION IN GENERAL BECAME A MAJOR ISSUE AS A RESULT OF CIVILIAN CHARGES OF PRESSURES AND "SABOTAGE". OTHER MORE IMPORTANT LONG TERM ISSUES HAVE HOWEVER BEEN DISCUSSED WITH REMARKABLE FRANKNESS ON THE PART OF THE

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CANDIDATES AND HAVE RECEIVED THOROUGH COVERAGE BY THE LOCAL PPESS. INDEED SINCE THE LIFTING OF PRESS CENSORSHIP IN LATE JULY THERE HAS BEEN UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR ISSUES AFFECTING THE VIET-NAM WAR. FOR EXAMPLE THE PEACE ISSUE HAS BEEN AIRED BY ALL PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES. QUESTIONS RELATING TO CONSCRIPTION, CORRUPTION, SOCIAL DISLOCATION, LAND REFORM, AND THE ROLE OF THE MILITWOS HAVE ALL RECEIVED FAIR SHARE OF PUBLIC ATTENTION.

5. THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE UPPER HOUSE HAS NOT BEEN AS ENCOURAGING, IN LEIGE MEASURE BECAUSE OF THE UNWIELDY NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE RACE AND INADQUATE MEANS TO ASSURE ALL 480 OF THEM EXPOSURE TO THE ENTIRE ELECTORATE. A NUMBER OF THE MORE ENTERPRISING SLATES HAVE HOWEVER TAKEN THE LIMITED RESOURCES PROVIDED THEM BY THE GVN COUPLED WITH THEIR OWN AND WAGED REASONABLY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNS. THE MOST COMMON PRACTICE HAS BEEN FOR THE TEN MEMBERS OF ANY GIVEN SLATE TO DIVIDE UP IN TRAVELLING TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ON BEHALF OF THEIR SLATE. MUCH CAN BE

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ACCOMPLISHED IN VIETNAM BY SIMPLE PERSONAL CONTACT WITH LOCAL LEADERS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS AND ALLIANCES AT THE PROVINCE AND DISTRICT LEVEL, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGNING SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS AS WE KNOW THEM IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES HAVE NOT YET DEVELOPED HERE, AND INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS BY CANDIDATES TAKE ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE AS DO SUCH DETAILS AS LEAFLETS, POSTERS AND SKILLFUL CHOICE OF CAMPAIGN SYMBOLS.

6. WE HAVE REPORTED IN SOME DETAIL THE VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS OF PRE-ELECTION HARASSMENT OF OPPOSITION CANDIDATES AND THE SPECULATION THAT ELECTION FRAUD WILL BE WIDESPREAD TOMORROW. THESE REPORTS CONTINUE TO BE RECEIVED AND IN SOME RECENT INSTANCES THEY SEEM TO BE BACKED WITH SOME EVIDENCE. WE HAVE NO PROOF THAT VOTE FRAUD WILL BE EXTENSIVE, HOWEVER.

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7. WE EXPECT INSTANCES OF OVER-ZEALOUS LOCAL OFFICIALS ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME ON BEHALF OF SOME CANDIDATE. MOST OF THESE WILL BE SUPPORTING THE GVN SLATE

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BUT NOT ALL. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, MOST OF THE CHARGES WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES BOTH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE FIELD HAVE NOT BEEN SUBSTANTIATED AS YET. IN SOME INSTANCES, CHARGES MADE BY CIVILIAN CANDIDATES IN SAIGON ABOUT SOME SITUATION IN A SPECIFIC PROVINCE HAVE BEEN DENIED BY THAT CANDIDATE'S OWN REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SPOT.
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O 021400Z SEP 67 ZFF1
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6089

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 4794

E X D I S

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

8. IT IS NOW BEING ALLEGED THAT MANY PEOPLE IN GIA DINH/ SAIGON ARE NOT RECEIVING THEIR VOTERS' CARDS. (AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, IN ORDER TO CAST BALLOT VOTER MUST APPEAR AT POLLING STATION WITH VALID ID CARD AND VOTER'S CARD). ONE SUCH REPORT FROM GIA DINH SUPPLEMENTS THESE RUMORS TO EFFECT THAT ON ASKING WHY VOTER'S CARD IS NOT BEING ISSUED, APPLIANT IS HANDED MINEOGRAPHED FORM SIGNED BY VILLAGE CHIEF STATING THAT HE HAS FAILED TO APPLY IN TIME FOR REGISTRATION. SAME SOURCE HAS INFORMED US THAT THIS PRACTICE IS FAIRLY WIDE-SPREAD IN GIA DINH. WE WISH TO STRESS THAT W HAVE YET TO VERIFY THESE ALLEGATIONS. IT MAY BE, HOWEVER, THAT

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 4794/2 S E C R E T
SAIGON/GIA DINH IS ONE LOCATION WHERE AUTHORITIES DECIDED IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THIEU/KY SLATE TO DO BETTER THAN IT OTHERWISE MIGHT HAVE AND HAVE ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUDICIOUS BALLOT-BOX STUFFING. IF THIS IS THE CASE, WE FEAR IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO HIDE SUCH MANIPULATION UNDER THE EYES OF BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS ND A VERY SKEPTICAL PRESS.

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9. WE ANTICIPATE THAT VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE SIMILAR TO PREVIOUS RECENT ELECTIONS, I.E. BETWEEN 70-80 PER CENT. VC TERROR WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN A FIGURE UNDER THE 80.8 PER CENT LEVEL OF THE SEPTEMBER, 1966 ELECTIONS.

10. IN MAKING OUR FINAL GUESSTIMATE OF THE ELECTION RESULTS WE CONTINUE TO BASE OUR JUDGMENTS AS MUCH ON INTUITION AS ON FACT. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DO NOT EXIST HERE, AND THERE ARE VERY FEW VIETNAMESE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS WHO WILL GIVE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 4794/2 S E C R E T
11. WE CONTINE TO FEEL THAT THIEU AND KY ARE THE FRONT RUNNERS, AND WE STILL ESTIMATE THAT THEY WILL HOLD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 35-45 PER CENT OF THE VALID VOTES CAST. IN TERMS OB LOC SUPPORT WE THINK THIEU AND KY LIKELY TO DO PARTICULARLY WELL IN HOA HAO, CHINESE, CAMBODIAN AND MONTAGNARD AREAS. THEY WILL ALSO RECIEVE SUBSTANTIAL CATHOLIC SUPPORT, ALTHOUGH TRAN VAN HUONG ALSO COMMANDS RESPECT OF MANY CATHOLICS BOTH NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN.

12. HUONG STILL SEEMS IN SECOND PLACE ALTHOUGH BY MANY ACCOUNTS SUU HAS GAINED STEADILY ON HUONG SINCE THE CAMPAIGN BEGAN, AND HE MIGHT HAVE PASSED HIM. WE ARE NOW INCLINED TO GIVE HUONG SOMEWHAT LESS THAN 30 PER CENT AND SUU ABOUT 25 PER CENT. HA THUC KY IS LIKELY TO FINISH FOURTH AND WE HAVE NO REASON TO CHANGE OUR PREVIOUS ESTIMATE THAT HE WILL GET ROUGHLY 8 PER CENT.

13. TRUONG INH DZU IS A DARKHORSE FOR 4TH PLACE AND CONTINUES IN OUR JUDGMENT TO BE THE STRONGEST OF THE MINOR CANDIDATES. HE HAS RUN A SURPRISINGLY EFFECTIVE AND

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MAINING MINOR CANDIDATES WILL DO VERY WELL ALTHOUGH SOME SOURCES RATE HOANG CO BINH RATHER HIGH IN SAIGON AND BOTH NGUYEN HOA HIEP AND VU HONG KHANH ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM SPLINTER FACTIONS FO THE VNQDD.

14. EVERYONE IN SAIGON CONSIDERS THAT PREDICTING THE OUTCOME OF THE UPPER HOUSE IS HAZARDOUS AT BEST. WE AGREE.

GP-3. BUNKER

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INFO SSO 00,NSCE 00,CCO 00,/025 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 4794

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

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9. WE ANTICIPATE THAT VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE SIMILAR TO PREVIOUS RECENT ELECTIONS, I.E. BETWEEN 70-80 PER CENT. SOMEWHAT LESS GVN PRESSURE TO GET OUT THE VOTE AND INCREASED VC TERROR WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN A FIGURE UNDER THE 80.8 PER CENT LEVEL OF THE SEPTEMBER, 1966 ELECTIONS.

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